

CHAPTER IX

Grapes of Wrath

"If you think by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement . . . the movement from which the down-trodden millions, the millions who toil in want and misery, expect salvation, if this is your opinion, then hang us!"

"Here you will tread upon a spark, but there and there, behind you and in front of you, and everywhere, flames blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out."

AUGUST SPIES, BEFORE BEING SENTENCED TO DEATH IN THE EIGHT-HOUR-DAY FRAME-UP IN CHICAGO, 1886.

1. The Fall and Rise of Mr. Grossup

The triumph that the Molly Maguires had never found, that had eluded Parsons and been denied to Debs, was about to arrive and it was sweet when it came at last.

Almost a hundred years of struggle was on the point of merging with the necessity of the moment. The spur of wage cuts and unemployment was driving men to a painful progress. The seed of industrial unionism, watered by the blood of Spies and countless members of the Knights of Labor and the Industrial Workers of the World, was beginning to grow.

What argument could not prove the developing facts of life revealed. Persuasion had not been able to convince most workers of the value of industrial unionism but great new battles on the picket line did convince them. The nightstick and tear gas are great educators and they were freely used throughout the thirties. A cop's club on the skull inclines one to believe in the class conflict. Confinement in a cell for shouting "Scab!" often makes one wonder if the law is really neutral. Retching from the effects of

vomiting gas, as the troops advance with bayonets, the victim sometimes doubts whether the sole function of the military is national defense.

Such occurrences as these, and they happened everywhere during the six years preceding formation of the CIO, prepared the soil for it. Solidarity, it was found, was not a noble sentiment but a rock-bottom requirement for living during the most severe depression in history. When the CIO exploded over the land in 1936, organizing on an industrial basis the great open-shop citadels of steel, coal, glass, rubber, auto, marine, electrical, and other mass industries almost overnight, it sometimes seemed as if the great event had occurred as suddenly as a flash of lightning.

But the subterranean fire of which Spies spoke had been smoldering. The CIO was the leaping flame suddenly blazing bright in the long night of the open shop. There was in fact a sudden boiling over of the American working class. But there had been a six-year simmering, six years of learning, six years of preparation through hunger marches and struggles of the unemployed; through battles against evictions and pay cuts and for unemployment insurance; through struggles of the new industrial unions which the AFL bureaucrats were everywhere trying to break up into crafts.

Unity was just a word used by agitators until actuality made it a necessity for survival. It was this unity, searched for and pursued down many a blind path during the years immediately preceding the CIO, that was the basis for that organization's triumph. But it came slowly. It had to be fought for. It was gained through painful experience, often personally suffered.

The depression was like some natural physical catastrophe, a flood, tornado, or hurricane, bringing monumental hardship in its wake. It was understood as little by the average man as if it had been some arbitrary disaster of nature. But, unlike a hurricane, it did not blow itself out. It continued year after year, 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1933, getting worse and worse, stronger and stronger, stripping millions of jobs and shelter, forcing millions to the homeless road; spreading to Latin America and Europe, enveloping nations and continents, the proud empire of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, the Balkans, all of Africa and Asia. World production fell by 42 per cent while world trade decreased by 65 per cent. There were some fifty millions of unemployed in all parts of the world.

But the Red Cross did not come after the depression struck. There was no rallying of forces or coming together to care for the sick and hungry although their number, increasing daily, was far greater than those injured or made homeless by tornado or earthquake. At first each man was alone, often sitting silently in his home, hiding his unemployment and growing poverty as if it were a shameful disease. Unlike a hurricane, the ravages of the depression could not be seen clearly in a well-defined path of destruction. Instead it was everywhere, and for a long time things looked al-

most as usual. But behind the cold, expressionless fronts of tenements, houses, and apartments, inside and concealed from the public gaze, men and women struggled alone at first, viewing their plight as personal, private disasters, a slow and dreadful panic rising within them.

Such was the position of Peter Grossup,¹ a tall, slim man of fifty-five, with a white, cliff-like face and a habit of comfortable silence. A skilled cabinetmaker, he had worked for twenty-six years for the Tonti Custom Furniture Company in a Middlewestern city of 300,000. Until he was laid off on Jan. 1, 1930, he had always regarded himself and his life with quiet satisfaction. He liked what was his. He liked his house, on which he owed only \$1,800 on a first mortgage, and he liked his wife and two children. Mary, seventeen, attended the Sacred Heart Academy, and George, nineteen, was about to complete his first year at the state university.

Those times after supper in the easy chair were the times he liked best. He never said much but he'd rattle *The Daily Record* open and read, half listening to the radio. He liked that Cameron fellow on the Ford Hour. A lot of sense. A man got what he earned. You got no more out of life than you put into it. After such a thought he'd sneak a look at Fanny in the kitchen, usually wearing her old gray sweater, and sometimes when the dishes were done she'd sit for a time beside him on the little leather seat that went with his chair. Occasionally he would fumble for her work-roughened fingers and turn them around so that he could see the plain band, the wedding ring he had given her twenty-one years before. He liked that ring.

That's the way evenings had been before he had been fired on Jan. 1, 1930. Eighteen months later, in the summer of 1931, they weren't much like that. Mr. Grossup still sat in his easy chair but he sat there all day now, turning things over in his mind, trying to see where he had made his mistake. Maybe if he had gone into electrical engineering, something with a future, things would not have gone this way.

It hadn't been so bad at first. Sometimes he would leave the house, all dressed up in his best, and then he'd walk fast with his back very straight, his face carefully held to bright alertness, trying to look as if he were hurrying to a business appointment. But he always ended up in the park. "Something will turn up," he had told his wife, "the President himself says so." He had \$312.62 in the First National Bank when he was laid off. After that went he cashed in a \$5,000 insurance policy and got \$1,900 for it. If it hadn't been for payments on the mortgage, \$58.50 a month, it would have lasted longer.

He had hated to part with his watch and was still always groping for it. It gave him an empty feeling, just like his vacant pocket, when his hand reached in for what wasn't there. He'd received only \$15 for it and Fanny had received even less for her wedding ring. "Trying to make a fool out of me," he asked, "pawning your own wedding ring? I suppose you wish

¹ This case history is based on an interview. For obvious reasons the exact name of the town or its location is not indicated.

you'd married somebody else?" Seemed like he'd fly off the handle these days just for anything. Like when she asked him why he didn't go for a walk and he went god-damning around that a man couldn't stay in his own home without being driven out.

Maybe if he had gone into radio things wouldn't have come out this way, Mr. Grossup sometimes thought as he sat in his chair and stared at the opposite wall. He could hear his wife stirring in the kitchen, making the small, rustling noises of a mouse as if she were afraid any louder noise might irritate him. The house was very still now. The two children were gone.

George had had to quit the state university. First he went to Chicago, then to St. Louis, later to Dallas, looking for work. He wished Fanny wouldn't worry so about the boy. He wouldn't fall under any freight. The last time they heard he was in San Diego, bumming his way from Dallas. He missed his daughter Mary. She had married. Mr. Grossup didn't like Mary's husband. Sometimes he even feared that she had gotten out of the house just to make things easier. No money and the man of the house just sitting there doing nothing.

For the last six months notices had been coming from the bank about the lapsed mortgage payments. Any day now. Any day now. He didn't let himself complete the thought. *The Record* was right, of course, when it pointed out that no one with get-up-and-go, no one with real initiative and enterprise, was on relief.

Going down to the county relief office had been the worst. He had had to stand in line with Negroes, and foreigners and people ragged enough to be bums. As a taxpayer and solid citizen he had never believed in the dole. Sure he was a union man but the AFL didn't believe in it either. Well, he hadn't gone there until Fanny and he had been hungry.

He had tried to explain to the social worker at county relief that his case was different. He wasn't a bum. When he got on his feet again—but she had just given him a tired smile, meant to be friendly but seeming mocking to Mr. Grossup, before saying, "Next!" It was hard for two people to live on \$12 a month.

If he could only borrow some money for the mortgage. He called the bank but they said it was too late now. The case was in the courts. There would be a judgment any day now.

His wife was standing in the kitchen door looking at him. He pretended not to see her.

"Peter," she said, "I just have to talk to you."

Still he didn't look at her. There was nothing to talk about.

"Peter, we just have to do something!"

"Do something? Do you think I sit here because I like to?"

Mrs. Grossup's mouth quivered.

"Peter, you never used to talk to me that way."

He glared at her. She did not retreat but eyed him firmly.

"I've been talking to Mrs. Flaherty next door. She says if you'd go down to the Unemployment Council on Spear Street we wouldn't be evicted."

Mr. Grossup was honestly shocked.

"Go down to that bunch of Communists? I'd die first!"

"Mr. Flaherty's a member of it. We've got to do something. The sheriff will be here any day now." In his excitement Mr. Grossup rose from his chair and stood grandly alone.

"*The Record* says that bunch is Communistic!"

"They can take my house," he said and his voice broke queerly, "but I am asking no help from any Communist!"

They came the next day. Mr. Grossup couldn't believe it. Even as they began taking down the beds, clumping through the house, moving the old sofa out into the street, he still couldn't believe it. They were robbing him and he was alone. There was no one to help him. There was no police to call on for they were the ones that were doing it. Or at least they were deputy sheriffs.

Mrs. Grossup stood in the kitchen, huddled in a corner so as to be out of the way, her face still and crumpled. Mr. Grossup, like a troubled shadow, followed the deputies in and out, grabbing at furniture that he thought might fall or be scratched. Out on the street he stood bewildered, surrounded by the property which had made his days, the refrigerator, the Atwater Kent, pots and pans, their wedding picture, a framed photograph of George with his high school baseball team, the beds and mattresses upon which they had slept, the dishes from which they had eaten. A deputy was speculatively examining some of Mrs. Grossup's best linen. Neighbors were standing around but Mr. Grossup could not meet their sympathy or even know it was that.

Coming through the door, tottering in the grasp of two deputies who found it hard to grasp securely, was his easy chair and, as Mr. Grossup ran to help, one of the deputies stumbled and the chair crashed down the steps.

"My God!" Mr. Grossup cried, "you can't do that!"

He was conscious of Mr. Flaherty plucking at his sleeve and trying to speak to him but his outrage was so intense that he did not answer him. The deputies were standing on the porch now looking at a group of men and women who had suddenly appeared. A tall Negro, apparently in charge, stood next to Mr. Flaherty.

"Good God!" Mr. Grossup cried again, trying to right his chair and restore the big leather cushion, "you can't treat a man's property that way!"

He looked around, his face twitching. Mr. Flaherty pulled at him again and said, "We're from the Unemployed Council. We want to help."

"Well, my God," shrieked Mr. Grossup, "if you want to help, do something then!"

The tall Negro looked briefly at the five deputies on the porch and then at his thirty unemployed.

"Move it back," he said.

In an instant before Mr. Grossup's very eyes all of his prized possessions, his easy chair, even the big refrigerator, the bed posts, the pictures, everything was streaming back into his home. The neighbors began grabbing pots and pans and mattresses and stumbling a little and laughing wildly and calling out in excited tones, clumping up onto the porch and into the house. There was a little scuffle once on the porch with the deputies but more and more neighbors were helping and they just pressed in.

Mr. Grossup never knew how it all happened. It was a happy blur. He had his home again. He had strength. He had friends. His chair was in its place. His wife seemed suddenly to have grown younger. Police reinforcements appeared but left after looking at the increasing crowd outside. Someone was making coffee and sandwiches in the kitchen.

It was like a party. Everyone was shouting and laughing and Mr. Grossup shook hands with at least two dozen men he had never met before. The Negro leader of the unemployed, Hugh Henderson, a sandwich in his hand, was making a speech from the front porch.

Mr. Grossup somehow found himself making a speech too. "After a life of hard work," he said. "Taking a man's home. It isn't right. They put my chair, everything, out on the street. Worked hard all my life. It isn't right."

There were cheers. Some of the crowd went away but more seemed inside the house. "We'll stay awhile," Mr. Henderson said, "to be sure the police don't come back."

A great tension, an awful loneliness, was slowly seeping from Mr. Grossup's veins. He hadn't known how miserable he had been. A man couldn't do anything by himself. He hadn't known how many people had been going through the same things he had.

Something had happened to him. He felt as if he had broken from the prison of his baffled self. No longer did he sit in his home all day. Still there were times on the picket line or while defying police as he helped move someone else's furniture back in that he wondered at the tight, little in-turned man he once had been. And it hadn't been much fun. He was growing under the impact of adversity and most of America was growing similarly.

2. *The Battle Cry of Poverty*

Hundreds of thousands of Mr. and Mrs. Grossups of every age, trade, creed, national origin, and political belief were coming together to fight the depression in 1932. As they changed, they changed the country. They transformed America from a place of despair to a country of struggle. They astonished themselves, not only by their courage and their militance but by the swiftness with which they learned, throwing aside old beliefs and habits which had brought them nothing but disaster. There were times that

a man learned more in an hour about what makes the world go than he had learned previously in a lifetime.

The slow boil was beginning that reached its climax with the CIO. The country was punctuated by picket lines, hunger marches, meetings demanding unemployment insurance and adequate relief. The unemployed had left their tenements and kitchens, the four walls in which they had hidden what they thought was their private shame, and their slogan now was "Don't Starve—Fight!"

Everyone was learning and experience was the teacher. In struggles against evictions and foreclosures, for food and shelter, the social power of people united—a power difficult to come by but absolutely irresistible when achieved—was being slowly perceived. The great lesson might be learned by such a simple occurrence as a man pleading for more relief, separately and alone, and being refused, and then winning the increase a week later when he returned with 5,000 members of the Unemployed Council.

There were Mr. Grossups who were Iowa farmers, crowding around an auctioneer selling a foreclosed homestead, law-abiding, conservative men who now grimly menaced anyone who bid more than a penny for the foreclosed farm. Pushing about a banker or real estate man about to buy the farm, the farmers often suggestively handled a rope as one of their number made the penny purchase and then returned the farm to its foreclosed owner. Despite the aid of neighbors and penny sales, between 1929 and 1933 some 1,000,000 farmers lost their property through foreclosure.

There were Mr. Grossups who were veterans of World War I, already planning their march on Washington to demand the adjusted service pay due them, often called the bonus. But the country hadn't seen anything yet. Police were assaulting hunger marchers, fifteen were killed in such demonstrations in 1932 and eight others were killed upon the picket line, but the great social upheaval in behalf of the common man was just beginning. Through trial and error it was being found that anything that divided was the cardinal sin. Through experience it was being slowly discovered that the spy and stool pigeon were everywhere, and that a man must be judged by performance and not by what newspaper, stool pigeon, or Congressman said of him.

The weapon of the jobless, the organization with which they fought and defended themselves, was the National Unemployed Council. It was organized in Chicago on July 4, 1930, at a convention attended by 1,320 delegates. Until the advent of the CIO it was perhaps the most vital and necessary of all American organizations.² It had councils and branches in forty-six states as well as in almost every town and city of the nation.

For the first time in history there was virtually no scabbing during a depression, the unemployed instead appearing on the picket line behind the banner of the Unemployed Council helping win the strikes of those fortu-

² In April, 1936, the Unemployed Council merged with the Socialist Workers Alliance and the National Unemployed League. In 1938 it had a membership of 800,000.

nate enough to be employed. Its primary function was agitation and mass demonstrations to the end that people might be fed. It increased the relief allotments of literally millions, campaigned for public works and unemployment insurance.

Negroes, hardest hit of any section of the population, were among the most active in the Council, which fought militantly against every form of racist discrimination. Such was the Council's power that the AFL reversed its position against unemployment insurance.⁸ The fact of its existence prevented the nation from ignoring or forgetting the 12,000,000 to 17,000,000 who were jobless by 1933.

One of the Unemployed Council's big jobs in all parts of the country was the preventing of evictions. Some indication of the vast size of this job can be gained from the fact that in five industrial cities of Ohio alone eviction orders were issued against nearly 100,000 families in the two and a half years beginning in January, 1930. In Chicago 3,611 families, including 26,515 children, were evicted during the year beginning in December, 1931. During the eight months ending June 30, 1932, some 185,794 families in New York City were served with dispossess notices. But 77,000 of these families were moved back into their premises by the people of the Unemployed Council.

On Feb. 2, 1932, the *New York Times* described the eviction of three families in the Bronx:

"Probably because of the cold, the crowd numbered only 1,000, although in unruliness it equalled the throng of 4,000 that stormed the police in the first disorder of a similar nature on January 22. On Thursday a dozen more families are to be evicted unless they pay back rents.

"Inspector Joseph Leonary deployed a force of fifty detectives and mounted and foot patrolmen through the street as Marshal Louis Novick led ten furniture movers into the building. Their appearance was the signal for a great clamor. Women shrieked from the windows, the different sections of the crowd hissed and booed and shouted invectives. Fighting began simultaneously in the house and in the street. The marshal's men were rushed on the stairs and only got to work after the policemen had driven the tenants back into their apartments."

And on February 27 the *New York Times* described a similar scene under the headline, "1,500 Fight Police To Aid Rent Strike."

⁸ Louis Weinstock of the Painters' Union did as much as any man to make unemployment insurance an actuality for the American worker. He headed the AFL Committee for Unemployment Insurance and Relief. This committee won the support for unemployment insurance of five international unions, thirty-five city central councils, six state federations, and almost 3,000 local unions. In 1953 Weinstock was sentenced to three years in prison for alleged violation of the thought-control Smith Act.

From the first the Unemployed Council was attacked as a Communist organization, and it was true enough that Communists gave it their backing and were active in it. From the first hundreds of thousands of non-Communists in the Unemployed Councils were faced with the question of whether they should leave an organization fighting militantly in their behalf or continue fighting for themselves in its ranks. They rejected all incitements toward witch hunts, declared that division through political purges meant weakness and further hardship for the unemployed, condemned Matthew Woll, AFL leader, who charged that the unemployed movement was only a Kremlin conspiracy.

From the first, too, the demonstrations and hunger marches were regarded by police and government as initial steps in revolution. The police in a score of cities jailed and clubbed the unemployed with an almost unprecedented ferocity, justifying their actions on the grounds that the jobless were trying to overthrow the government.

The first nationwide protest against unemployment was called by the Trade Union Unity League and the Communist Party on March 6, 1930. On that date huge meetings were held in all parts of the country, an estimated 1,250,000 unemployed participating in them. More than 100,000 demonstrators gathered in Detroit. Some 50,000 came together in Chicago. A like number met in Pittsburgh and there were huge crowds of unemployed at meetings in Milwaukee, Cleveland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, Seattle, and Philadelphia.

In New York 110,000 packed Union Square. Suddenly the vast throng was attacked by 25,000 police. Hundreds were beaten to the ground with nightsticks, scores trampled by the charge of mounted police. The police went as insane as they had fifty-six years before when they clubbed the unemployed at New York's Tompkins Square, and their excuse in 1930 was identical with that of 1874. The jobless, they said, were Communists.

A *New York World* reporter, describing the assault at Union Square, told of:

"... women struck in the face with blackjack, boys beaten by gangs of seven and eight policemen, and an old man backed into a doorway and knocked down time after time, only to be dragged to his feet and struck with fist and club.

"... detectives, some wearing reporters' cards in hat bands, many wearing no badges, running wildly through the crowd, screaming as they beat those who looked like Communists.

"... men with blood streaming down their faces dragged into the temporary police headquarters and flung down to await the patrol wagons to cart them away."

Hundreds of the unemployed were arrested as was the case in Detroit, too, where police also attacked the demonstration.

But the unemployed movement strengthened and grew; the demand for unemployed insurance became increasingly irresistible.

Even the notorious Fish Committee created in 1930 to investigate Communism could not frighten the American people with the time-hallowed cry of "Red." Said Congressman Fiorello H. La Guardia of New York, attacking the Fish Committee on the floor of Congress:

"I would sooner spend that money [money to be used to investigate Communism] for something necessary, for something constructive in the way of solving the unemployment problem. Remove the cause of discontent and there will be no danger of Communistic activity. But if there is unemployment, if there is want, suffering and hunger, no investigation by Congress on communism will stifle resentment. Every open shopper will call everyone who seeks to protect the interests of the workers a bolshevik. Let us not be enticed away on an appeal for security into a movement for the open shop, to destroy labor unions in this country."

Fish Committee or no Fish Committee, demonstrations of the unemployed went on. Three thousand members of the Unemployed Council marching in St. Louis forced the passage at city hall of two relief bills. In Chicago 5,000 members of the Council forced the improvement of conditions involving 20,000 jobless living in municipal lodgings. With most cities approaching bankruptcy, with President Hoover still staunchly against federal relief, unemployment insurance, or anything except loans to Big Business, such demonstrations were necessary to avoid starvation. Their value is attested by Mauritz H. Hallgren, who wrote in his *Seeds of Revolt*:

"Social workers everywhere told me that without street demonstrations and hunger marches of the Unemployed Councils no relief whatever would have been provided in some communities, while in others even less help than that which had been extended, would have been forthcoming."

As banks continued to fail while factories increasingly closed down and unemployment continued to rise, the prestige of the National Unemployed Council steadily mounted. Its leaders had a program—federal relief, unemployed insurance, public works, the elimination of discrimination against the Negro people—which was more than could be said for the frightened leaders of business and government, baffled and chastened by a disaster which they could neither understand nor control. Day by day the world seemed to grow more topsy-turvy, a world in which the jobless acted with increasing unity and confidence, in which the great sulked in semiretirement.

In December, 1932, the Unemployed Council organized a national hunger march on Washington while stout, silver-haired old gentlemen in various Union Leagues and other exclusive clubs whispered again of the threat of revolution and of the guillotine. As columns from all over the country, their approach synchronized by careful organization, converged

on Washington, coming on foot, on freights, in broken-down jalopies, panic seized Senators and lobbyists, Cabinet members and retired admirals. Congressmen demanded protection, prophesied revolution, and as the tattered army marched down Pennsylvania Avenue troops were mobilized for instant action at forts and installations encircling the nation's capital.

There were only 3,000 of the hungry, but they were the menacing representatives of millions like themselves. The police had arrested Coxey in 1894, during a similar Washington demonstration, for walking on the grass, but there were no arrests in 1932. The parade was flanked by three times as many police as the number in the line of march and there was consternation when the marchers' band played on the steps of the Capitol.

A delegation was received by crusty Charlie Curtis, Republican Vice President and politician from Kansas, who trembled with rage at the duty forced upon him. "Don't cast any reflections on me!" he cried in a querulous, old man's voice. "You just hand me your petition; you needn't make any speech. I have only a few minutes time."

Cactus Jack Garner, Democratic Speaker of the House, equally testy and equally reluctant to receive the delegation, addressed the chairman as Mr. Levinsky. When the chairman said his name was Levinson, Mr. Garner said, "What's the difference?" He waited impatiently for the petition for unemployment insurance and then hurried away without a word, obviously feeling that the starving should starve quietly, without benefit of bands, marches, and petitions.

But the starving were not quiet in 1932. In the South Negro and white sharecropper were coming together in the Sharecroppers Union. Ralph Gray, its Negro leader in Alabama, was lynched by a mob after the union passed resolutions hailing the international fight to save nine Negro youths, the Scottsboro Boys, condemned to death on a charge of rape although even one of the women allegedly raped said that it was a frame-up and no attack had ever taken place. The Negro people were in motion to an extent in excess of anything since Reconstruction. Almost half of the hunger marchers in the Washington demonstration had been Negroes and their initiative and courage were manifest in all of the actions of the unemployed.

As the sharecroppers of the South fought off mobs and violence in 1932, the farmers of Iowa, Illinois, North Dakota, Nebraska, and New York were grabbing pitchforks and wrenches, setting up roadblocks and barricades upon the routes that led to markets. Thousands of them were on strike against prices so low that crops were being sold for less than cost. They were following the old advice of the Populists to "raise less corn and more hell!" Stones crashed through the windshields of farmers who sought to run the blockades and sell their produce. Milk was dumped, trucks were wrecked, their drivers beaten, vegetables and grain scattered to the roadside. The *New York Times* reported on Aug. 16, 1932, from Sioux City, Iowa:

"Scores of trucks loaded with milk, farm products and livestock headed for Sioux City have been turned back today on nearly every highway after the drivers have been warned in no uncertain terms.

"More than forty trucks were halted . . . north of the city, where hundreds of farmers had gathered.

"A few trucks crashed through a steel cable which was stretched across a bridge, but were blocked a second time when railroad ties were thrown under the wheels."

Other trucks were stopped when pitchforks were used to puncture tires. Still others by stretched barbed wire, boards with nails, and barricades of logs. At Leeds, Iowa, according to the *New York Times*, "one milk truck went through the farmers' lines, but pickets smashed the windshield with sticks and rocks."

As the farmers of Iowa were planning their strike early in 1932, thousands of unemployed Ford workers in Detroit, led by the Unemployed Council, were also planning action to better their condition. In February Edsel Ford, son of Henry, had issued a statement in which he had apparently generously offered to help unemployed Ford workers, of whom there were then 85,000. Taking him at his word, his former employees decided to march to the plant at Dearborn on March 7, 1932, when they were to present a program through which they could be re-employed.

Philip Bonosky writes of the hunger march to Dearborn which ended in massacre by Ford police of Ford workers:

"It was early, it was cold when the first of the unemployed Ford workers (many of whom had been laid off only the day before) arrived at Baby Creek Bridge. They were a small gray group, and they stood slapping their sides, warding off the cold, and wondering if they alone would come. And then, one by one, emerging with hunched shoulders from Miller Road, others joined them; and then suddenly a hundred workers with banners came briskly marching, and cheers and singing broke forth.

"Then truckloads rolled in from Dearborn, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, Er-corse—yes, from Inkster, too. As each arrived, the marchers were greeted with more cheers, with louder and more triumphant songs, with great laughter. Old friends found old friends; there were hugs and handshakes, and a great impatience to get going.

"The leaders arrived: Al Goetz, Communist and chairman of the Michigan Unemployed Council; Joe York, district organizer of the Young Communist League, a fresh, strong-faced boy of barely nineteen; James Ashford, young Negro worker, active in the organization of the unemployed and in the campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys. (He carried a banner: FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS!) There were others—names that would never be forgotten, but now only simple, ordinary people: young Joe Bussell, Joe DeBlasio, Coleman Leny. . . ."

The army of unemployed Ford workers, their banners shining in the uncertain sunlight of the late winter morning, advances toward the great stern plant in which most had spent years of their lives building Ford cars and one of the greatest American fortunes. But their fortune is unemployment. As they approach the Dearborn city line, the city owned by Ford, Al Goetz climbs up on a truck and cries, "Remember we don't want any violence! A committee will present our demands. No trouble. No fighting. Stay in line."

Now the Dearborn police are drawn across the roadway but the great press of marchers, extending for blocks behind the Dearborn boundary and unconscious of the armed police there, push ahead and thrust those leading through the line of police. Hundreds of Ford gangsters, the Ford service men under command of Ford's Harry Bennett, protected by fences, from behind buildings, send a deadly fire into the ranks of the marching men as they approach the plant with their plan for re-employment. Bonosky writes:

"Then came the bullets. They whistled past Bill's ears, and he remembered his days in the trenches in France, and shuddered . . . men and women fell before him as though suddenly broken. Young James Ashford, his FREE THE SCOTTSBORO BOYS tumbling, pitched to the ground with a bullet in his leg. In front Joe York fell. Some ran screaming with blood flowing from wounds in chest and shoulders; others writhed on the ground, staring at the bones of their shattered legs.

"The marchers fell back; but again, the incredible courage of them surged up. They picked up their wounded—there were almost 60—these men and women who had never seen wounded before; but they did not run in panic. Blood soaked the road. . . . A machine gun, inside the gates, sent out a roar of death. . . . More marchers fell. Their shocked faces were thrown to the sky and they collapsed on the ground, holding their empty, defenseless hands to their bleeding stomachs. Three more lay dead; Joe Bussell, Coleman Leny, and Joe DeBlasio. Twenty-three others lay seriously wounded."

That was the Ford Massacre. But it was too late to stop the American people with bullets.

3. MacArthur Wins a Battle

The veterans of World War I were about to show how late it was. Thousands of them, under a Congressional Act of 1923, had \$50 or \$100 coming to them under a provision for adjusted service pay. The money, however, would not be paid until 1945. But in 1932 \$50 or \$100 seemed a fortune, meant the difference between eating and not eating if only for a matter of weeks. Under the spur of want a strange, spontaneous movement got under way in which, with almost no organization, detachments of veterans, many

accompanied by their wives and children, headed toward Washington, getting there any way and any how with a demand to Congress for pay now.

It all began in April, 1932, when Communist leaders of the Workers Ex-Servicemen's League, Peter Cacchione, James W. Ford, and Emanuel Levin, testified before the House Ways and Means Committee, demanding immediate payment of the so-called bonus; the adjusted service pay which provided for additional pay of \$1 a day for World War I service in the armed forces at home, \$1.25 for service overseas, but with payment deferred for thirteen years. When the Congressional committee scorned the demand, the Communists issued a call for a march of veterans on Washington but few thought that a call issued under such auspices would result in much.

For many of the influential did not realize the humiliation of the depression, a humiliation particularly marked in those who had once been hailed as heroes and told that they had made the world safe for democracy. They had saved their country, the veterans said, and what had they got? Evictions, joblessness, hunger, sickness, sometimes lack of shelter save for Hoovervilles.⁴ The call for the march had scarcely been issued when veterans who wouldn't have known a Communist from a Mohammedan began their remarkable trek to Washington.

In jalopies and on foot, in broken-down trucks and on freights, stopping passenger trains and demanding free rides, the veterans started their Bonus March. They came from Alaska, some 4,000 miles. Three stowed away in a ship sailing from Honolulu to San Francisco and then advanced, thumbing rides, hopping freights. They converged on Washington in groups as large as 1,000; single families trudged northward on Alabama roads, the father holding a baby in his arms, the mother herding her young before her; groups would clatter into town in a wheezy truck, half-starved and half-frozen from the spring rains, demanding food and gasoline, singing and shouting, filled with disrespect and a strange recklessness.

The first contingent left early in May from Portland, Ore., its membership including 200 veterans and a number of women and children. The prominent there had tried to deter them, pointing out that it had been Communists who had called for the march, but veterans were reported to have declared, "We don't give a damn who called it. We want our money. Money isn't Communist."

As over the land they moved, coming from every direction, from Little Rock, Ark., and Niles Center, Ill., and Peru, Ind., and Dubuque, Iowa,

⁴ These Hoovervilles, named by the jobless in honor of President Hoover, were to be found in almost all of the large cities of the country. Here in nondescript shelters lived the destitute and homeless, tens of thousands of men, women, and children. The squalor and misery surrounding them may be gleaned from the following: "An expectant mother lives in Hooverville, on the edge of the industrial section of Los Angeles, with no shelter except a piece of canvas stretched over the bed. She and her husband have been out of work for months. For food they eat the decaying vegetables given away by the wholesale markets as unfit for sale." (Letter from a Los Angeles worker quoted in G. Hutchins, *Women Who Work*, p. 3)

and Grays Harbor, Wash., always moving closer to Washington, from north, south, east, and west, so strange and reckless and insistent, a queer hysteria began to rise in the ranks of the great and respectable. They must be turned back, the newspapers said, they must be dispersed, forced back to their homes.

Several thousand arrived in Cleveland where they took over the switchyards, preventing the moving of traffic until a freight had been made up for them. Nine hundred had left from Chicago, 600 from New Orleans, 700 from Philadelphia, while 200 wounded, many of them on crutches, some with horrible mutilations from the battlefields of France, were coming from the National Soldiers Home at Johnson City, Tenn.

And always they carried their bitter signs, "Heroes in 1917—Bums in 1932," and "We Fought for Democracy—Where Is It?" The Negro veterans, of whom there were many, virtually always carried signs about Jim Crow and discrimination, signs reminding those who saw them that the Negroes had fought to make the world safe for democracy fourteen years before.

They must be turned back, declared General Pelham Glassford, chief of police of Washington, D.C. He sent telegrams in all directions with this demand, to governors and chiefs of police, to mayors and sheriffs, but one might as well have tried to turn back the tide. By June there were more than 20,000 veterans in Washington, streaming through the corridors of Congress, buttonholing Representatives and Senators, demanding that a bill be passed granting them their money now, not thirteen years from 1932.

The first veterans to arrive took shelter in an abandoned building at Third Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. Others built a little village of huts in a nearby open space. As the hosts of unkempt men, soiled from traveling and hardship, continued to stream into Washington, often accompanied by tired wives and whimpering children, they were directed across the Potomac to a flat and dreary stretch of land known as Anacostia Flats. By June 15 almost 25,000 were living in as strange a community as has ever been seen upon the North American continent, living in caves and holes in the ground, in shacks constructed of packing boxes, in tents and lean-tos and in nothing at all save for blankets beneath the sky. And all in the very heart of the nation, not far from the Capitol and the White House, democratic symbols of the people's power.

By June 15, according to the later statement of Police Chief General Glassford, it had been decided that the men who had fought for their country and who were now petitioning Congress must be dispersed. Demands that this be done, General Glassford said, had rolled in from the respectable everywhere. "Some members of the wealthy classes," said General Glassford, "looked upon the occupation of the nation's capital as a revolutionary action." As a consequence of this concern, General Glassford went on, troops and Marines in and about Washington began in June to re-

ceive special instructions in the use of tear gas and "maneuvers incident to dispersing crowds."

"Some members of the wealthy classes" had also decided that the veterans should not receive their adjusted pay and they so informed Congress through their National Economy League. This organization, formed at about the time the bonus army began to gather in the spring of 1932, threw all of its weight against payments to the veterans. Its weight was considerable since it was financed by such figures as John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Marshall Field, Mrs. H. P. Davison, widow of a Morgan partner, Edward S. Harkness, of the Standard Oil, and others of similar stature.⁵

Congress adjourned on July 17 without taking action on the veterans' petitions, its members swiftly scurrying out of town. On July 28 Washington police under General Glassford ordered several hundred veterans out of the building at Third Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, and when they refused police advanced with drawn guns. The veterans fought. Two of them were killed and word of their killing was dispatched to the White House as the veterans rallied for a stand before their shacks near Pennsylvania Avenue.

President Hoover, who had not acted effectively during almost three years of depression, now acted with dispatch. He called out the United States Army against the former members of the United States Army, their wives, and children. There was a little delay while General Douglas MacArthur, Chief of Staff who was to command this assault against Americans, sent to a nearby fort for his uniform. He was joined by Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower and Major George O. Patton. General Glassford, as he later reported, visited General MacArthur and told him there were women and children among the bonus marchers at Anacostia Flats. "I know it," General MacArthur said, according to the chief of police.

The troops were drawn up in Pennsylvania Avenue when General MacArthur and Colonel Eisenhower arrived at about 4 P.M. Some of the bonus marchers were barricaded at Third Street, where there was a shanty village of veterans, and it was decided to oust them before advancing to the Battle of Anacostia Flats. *The New York Times* reported:

⁵ Concerning Archibald B. Roosevelt, secretary of the National Economy League, as well as some others in it, Congressman Patman told the House on Jan. 3, 1933: "Archibald Roosevelt is interested in getting a cold million dollars a year subsidy from the Government on one of these Government ocean and steamship lines, when a canary bird could fly across the ocean on Christmas Day carrying all the mail they carry. Admiral Byrd, another active member of this outlaw group, is drawing \$4,600 a year from the Government, not because of any service-connected disability incurred during the war. Then there is our friend, General Pershing, who draws \$21,000 a year from the Government, another member of this outlaw organization. He is very much aggrieved and disturbed because some of these ex-buck privates who served under him are now drawing \$12 a month for 49 per cent disability." (*Congressional Record*, 72:2, p. 1232.)

"Down Pennsylvania Avenue . . . the regulars came, the cavalry leading the way, and after them the tanks, the machinegunners and the infantry. . . . There was a wait of maybe half an hour while the Army officers talked it over with the police and the bonus marchers shouted defiance. . . .

"Twenty steel-helmeted soldiers led the way with revolvers in their hands until 200 were in position in front of the 'bonus fort.' Then the mounted men charged. They rode downstreet clearing the path with their sabres, striking those within reach with the flat of their blades.

"The action was precise, well-executed from a military standpoint, but not pretty to the thoughtful in the crowd. There were those who resisted the troops, fought back, cursed, kicked at the horses. . . .

"Amidst scenes reminiscent of the mopping up of a town in the World War, Federal troops . . . drove the army of bonus seekers from the shanty village near Pennsylvania Avenue."

As the cavalrymen, swinging their sabres, cleared the barricade, infantrymen, gas masks on their faces, advanced on the pathetic, makeshift group of packing-box huts, the women and children running shrieking before their country's soldiers who lobbed tear gas bombs after them.

Mrs. John Meyers, an eleven-week-old infant in her arms, was one of those fleeing. "I simply did not know which way to turn," she later said. "We ran up a porch and the gas came down. Then a family across the street called to us to come into their house. The troops came up the hill, driving the people ahead of them. As they passed the house, one of them threw a bomb over the fence and into the front yard, just a few feet from the door. The house was filled with smoke and we all began to cry. We got wet towels and put them over the faces of the children. An hour later my baby began to vomit. . . . Next day it turned black and blue and we took it to the hospital." There the eleven-week-old baby died, a casualty of the United States Army.

The victorious army, its cavalrymen and tanks, its infantry and machine-gun detachments, pressed on to Anacostia Flats as the summer evening deepened into dusk. There the veterans had gathered for a last stand at the entrance of their encampment, some timber mattresses, chairs, boxes, and tables thrown before them for protection, their wives and children behind anxiously watching from the caves and huts that had lodged them.

At one end of the barricade a tall Negro veteran held an American flag while other veterans crouched near him. Among them was a relative of Abraham Lincoln, a sixth cousin, now facing his country's troops, Charles Frederick Lincoln, described as "a slight man, deeply tanned by the exposure of the march." He had come with a Pacific Coast contingent from Los Angeles. Nearby was John Pace, a "hard-boned gangly American veteran . . . whose ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and Civil War and whose father, a farmer like his own father, had served in the Spanish-American War."

The battle was swift and savage. The cavalry charged, sabres swinging, and again the infantry moved in with gas masks and gas bombs. Soon the pathetic city of the veterans was ashes, soldiers putting the huts and small belongings to the torch. Their jalopies, too, were destroyed. Again men, women, and children fled, pursued by their country's troops, blinded by gas, staggering through the streets of nearby neighborhoods.

The United States Army was again victorious. Master of the field, General MacArthur was being interviewed by reporters when one of them said that he had seen a cavalryman use his sabre to slash off a veteran's ear. But that was quite impossible, said the General, a little amused. "You don't slash with a sabre. You lunge." He took a noble pose and lunged forward, illustrating the proper form.

"The mob was a bad-looking one," General MacArthur continued. "It was one marked by signs of revolution. The gentleness and consideration with which they had been treated they had mistaken for weakness."

Flushed with victory, President Hoover issued a proud and ringing statement. "A challenge to the authority of the United States has been met swiftly and firmly," he said. "After months of patient indulgence, the government met overt lawlessness as it always must be met. . . . The first obligation of my office is to uphold and defend the Constitution and the authority of the law. This I propose always to do."

All that night and the next day the former members of the United States army poured out of their capital in retreat. Some carried children, some were limping, some occasionally vomited by the roadside from the effects of the gas. There was a good deal of confusion. Children were lost and crying. Women passed down columns looking for their husbands from whom they had become separated.

South into Virginia, north into Pennsylvania, over into Maryland, the 25,000 fled from their government and its army. A few were on crutches, some were cursing, and many were weeping with anger and shame. They had exercised their constitutional right of petitioning Congress, and the army in which they had proudly fought had been turned against them; their own army in battle dress had attacked their wives and children.

Well might they weep.

But they did not weep long. A hard anger seized the people, the common people, the working people, and it was to flare strong on many a picket line that built the CIO. And, along this road, the bonus was won.

4. *Tear Gas and Solidarity*

In that summer of 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Governor of New York, graduate of Groton and Harvard, product of a background of wealth and aristocracy, was campaigning on the Democratic ticket for the Presidency against Republican Herbert Hoover. Conservative enough when

nominated by the Democratic convention at Chicago, the pressures of the time and the rank and file of the American people were already impelling him to growth. Time was to come when Liberty Leaguers, Christian Fronters, and America Firsters were to charge that he, the President of the United States, was himself a Communist or at least a fellow traveler. But now the land's reactionaries were speaking softly when they spoke at all.

Definitive disaster, complete breakdown, seemed increasingly inevitable. The Democratic candidate, receiving reports from all parts of the country, felt that armed revolution of the American people was a possibility unless immediate measures were taken to relieve three years of suffering.

In an interview with Emile Gauvreau, editor and publisher of the *New York Graphic*, Governor Roosevelt said that he proposed American recognition of the Soviet Union, reversing the policy of hostility that had been directed against Russia by every American administration since 1917. He quickly passed, however, to the alarming situation at home.

"Our people have to be put back on their feet," he said. "It will have to be soon. They are getting restless. Coming back from the West last week, I talked to an old friend who runs a great western railroad. 'Fred,' I asked him, 'what are the people talking about out here?' I can hear him answer even now. 'Frank,' he replied, 'I'm sorry to say that men out here are talking revolution.' "

The people of the world were on the move and monopoly the world over was afraid. Five weeks before Franklin Delano Roosevelt was sworn in as President of the United States, after having been elected by a 7,000,000 majority and carrying all but six of our forty-eight states, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany as the representative of German monopoly. Immediately Hitler disbanded the trade unions, formed a monopoly-dominated government front of labor, moved against every people's organization with the charge that it was a Communist conspiracy. Within a matter of months thousands of trade unionists, Communists, Jews, Socialists, churchmen, and progressives were either executed or in concentration camps where they lamented the lack of unity that had brought Hitler into power. Thirty thousand German Communists had lost their lives in the fight against Hitler and reaction during the 1920's.

During the long preliminary fight against the rise of Hitler, many had believed that German monopoly's attack against the Communists would be limited to the Communists. They did not know that it was only a prelude to their own destruction, as events proved, and the destruction of all German liberty won by the trade unions and labor over long, hard years of struggle. Hamstrung and paralyzed by Hitler's red scare, a campaign that went on day after day and year after year, almost every German newspaper filled with "spy" stories and allegations of Communist conspiracies against the state, the German people had been unable to unite while the very Nazi-monopoly forces which had declared that Communists were about to seize the country took the country over themselves.

By a similar device, and similarly with employers' backing, Mussolini had seized power in Italy in 1922. Now both Hitler and Mussolini, the latter about to assault Ethiopia, were eying democratic Spain, determined that it would be their first joint victim in the Fascist drive to "save the world from Communism" by armed conquest. Wages in both Italy and Germany plunged to unparalleled lows while speed-up and hours of labor reached new heights as the industries of both countries boomed with the profits of munitions and armaments. They were necessary, the dictators said, for self-defense against the Soviet Union.

But in the United States the militant people, constantly increasing their unity as they largely ignored the growing shout of "Red!" had brought forth a democratic leader. There was hope even though the new President, sworn in on March 4, 1933, began his administration on a day that seemed to mark the complete breakdown of the economic life of the United States.

During February, 1933, with Roosevelt elected but Hoover still in the White House, runs on banks, bank failures, and bank closings in state after state had brought the financial system of the country to a virtual standstill. Money was disappearing. Wages could not be paid. Purchases could not be made. Food could not be bought. Checks were not honored. Vast crowds, ruined by the bank closings, clamored, wept, and rioted before silent, vacant savings institutions in every large city, their life savings gone they knew not where. Bankers, pillars of the community, were everywhere confessing, or being forced to confess by overwhelming facts, that they had lost their depositors' money in buying Wall Street's worthless securities and foreign bonds.

State after state, beginning with Michigan and spreading to Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, California, Texas, ordered all banks closed, froze their assets, if any, forbade any withdrawal of funds. By

March 4, the day of F.D.R.'s inauguration, about three-fourths of the states had closed all banks, had suspended bank withdrawals and instituted what was called a Bank Holiday.

City funds were frozen everywhere. City services often came to a halt. Schools were closing. In many places they had been closed for weeks due to lack of municipal funds. Department stores and factories, grocery stores and butchers, mines and steel mills could not meet their payrolls nor could their customers make payments. New currencies were invented by corporations and cities but no one wanted the worthless paper.

Now the great of the country were naked. The open-shoppers stood stripped and the Red Peril did not seem the peril at all. The peril had been the conspiracy of Wall Street. The omniscient industrialist, the great financier, the all-wise businessman were revealed for dishonest incompetents. They were neither honest nor wise. The country had come to a total standstill because of their policies.

"What a mess for the new President to step into," virtually everyone was

saying as they approached their radios that noon of March 4 to hear the inaugural of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

With almost the first syllable there was relief. Within a matter of moments there was courage. The confident lilting voice was facing facts, calling a spade a spade, heaping the country's scorn on the wealthy who had betrayed the people for love of profit. "We must drive the money-changers from the temple," the curiously alive and confident voice declared, and people everywhere leaned nearer their radios, intent on not missing a word.

"There must be an end to speculation with other people's money. . . ."

"Values have shrunk to fantastic levels, the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problems of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Our great primary task is to put people to work. I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require."

A permanent excitement seized the land, almost a gladness, in those early days of the New Deal when, after years of government idleness in respect to the welfare of the people, act followed act, and law followed law, each one designed to meet the emergency. Relief, recovery, reform were the watchwords of the New Deal as huge public works were got under way in the sending of thousands back to work and wages. First there was the Emergency Banking Act in which all banks were forced to remain closed until given federal approval or until they were reorganized under federal supervision. Immediately laws were passed designed to prevent the widespread misrepresentation and dishonesty in the sale of securities and the use of other people's money in speculation on Wall Street.

There was the CCC, the Civilian Conservation Corps, to give employment to the impoverished youth of the country; there was the AAA, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, to help the hard-pressed farmers of the nation; there was the NIRA, the National Industrial Recovery Act with its Section 7(A), the opening wedge for workers to organize in unions of their own choosing; there was the Wagner Act or National Labor Relations Act, to guarantee wage earners for the first time the right to bargain collectively and the right to strike by prohibiting specifically coercive anti-union activities on the part of employers; and there was the Fair Labor Standards Act, to prescribe maximum hours of work and minimum wages and regulate child labor in interstate commerce.

The purpose of F.D.R. and his New Deal was the saving of the menaced capitalist system and yet in a very real sense it was a people's movement, too. It was the militance and unity of the people, particularly labor, farmers, and the Negro people, that drove the New Deal forward. A high point in American democracy, the New Deal was the necessary answer to the

people's insistent demands. F.D.R. became a world figure because he moved to meet the people's needs.

There was an élan to all his acts, a shining challenge that rallied labor, farmers, and the Negro people to a fighting unity in which there was neither witch hunt nor red scare. His Fireside Chats, frequent reports to the people over the radio, seemed to bring the President of the United States into every home, almost as if he were a friendly neighbor. There was excitement in the fact that at long last there was a man in the White House, a human being of ability, and there was a great surge of hope stemming from the fact that here was a President who actually talked sense. It seemed unprecedented.

He spoke of peace not war, of friendliness among the nations of the earth, of an end to conquest and imperialism, of collective security which he increasingly saw as joint action of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France, for the purpose of restraining the rising fascism of Germany, Italy, and imperial Japan. The people loved him for the enemies he made. Wall Street was against him to a man.

Among the first actions of the New Deal, as has been said, was the passage in 1933 of the National Industrial Recovery Act. In the hullabaloo of setting up the vast organization, the country seethed with activity. It seemed good to be alive. Action was a tonic that made life worth living. Everywhere people gathered in meetings, chastened businessmen and eager workers, drawing up plans for the NIRA codes that were to restore and revivify American life.

Recovery was to be gained through the self-organization of each industry which would restore itself under government supervision through eliminating cutthroat competition, through setting up fair practices and fair standards, through increasing purchasing power by higher wages, through agreeing on minimum wages and hours. But the heart of the act, as far as labor was concerned, was Section 7(A), which stipulated as a matter of solemn law that workers were to be allowed to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing.

The average worker at first saw in the NIRA only the chance of getting a raise and better hours as well as a trade union to protect both. Everybody else, he said, was getting something out of the NIRA and he was damned if he was going to stand aside, an untouchable who got nothing. Newspaper-men and clerks, white-collar workers who had never thought of trade unions, began to wonder if their clean hands and white collars were sufficient recompense for having nothing to say but "yes sir" about their hours, pay, and conditions.

The workers in auto, electrical manufacturing, rubber, glass and marine, in Westinghouse, RCA and Standard Oil, in General Electric and United States Steel, began to wonder if the American Plan, the open shop, that made the workers voiceless and powerless as to the conditions of their own lives, was really the last word in patriotism.

The law now said that an employer *had* to bargain collectively with unions, and millions of workers were suddenly becoming fanatically determined that employers would do just that. It became more imperative to them when the gains of the NIRA as to wages and hours proved in the overwhelming majority of cases to be unsatisfactory. And when company unions were set up, their members often determined to capture them and transform them into real unions.

And it was on the picket lines that the workers struggled with their employers to make Section 7(A) of the NIRA mean something. In 1933 more than 900,000 workers went on strike for union recognition and wage increases, three times more than the previous year. Trade union membership zoomed as 775,000 workers flocked into labor organizations, 500,000 into the AFL, 150,000 into independent unions, and 125,000 into the Trade Union Unity League. The latter organization led strikes in steel, auto, coal mining, meat packing, and the beet sugar industry. In 1933 alone the TUUL conducted strikes of 16,000 auto workers in Detroit, 5,000 to 6,000 steel workers in Ambridge, Pa., and 2,700 meat packers in Pittsburgh.⁶

The strike wave continued into 1934, when mass picket lines increased to nearly 1,500,000 workers. More than 450,000 textile workers went on strike after sixteen were killed on their picket lines. The year 1935 saw 1,150,000 on strike fighting for union recognition and improved working conditions. Some 18,000 workers were dragged from the picket lines, arrested, and jailed. From 1934 to 1936 eighty-eight workers lost their lives in strikes.

While workers were being killed and arrested on picket lines, great locals were being formed in steel, textile, auto, glass, rubber, and the electrical industry. The workers formed industrial unions, knowing that it would be obtuse and weak to separate and divide a plant's strength by fragmenting it into a score of competing craft unions.

Unwillingly, throughout 1934 and 1935, the AFL granted membership to these massive industrial unions that had formed themselves almost spontaneously in response to Section 7(A) of the NIRA. With worry and apprehension the Old Guard of the AFL issued what they termed federal charters, frankly declaring that as soon as they had time the new industrial unions would be divided among the crafts.

But that was not their only worry. As soon as the unions were formed, almost before they were formed, their new members wanted action, strikes, results. AFL organizers were dispatched all over the country, to Akron, Toledo, Gary, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, San Francisco, their mission not organization but preventing strikes and checking the torrent of militance everywhere growing.

Such was the aggressive spirit of the workers that this was no easy job. It took two years to accomplish it and even as the unprecedented movement

⁶ The Trade Union Unity League was led in 1933 by Jack Stachel, who was later to be sentenced to a five-year prison term under the thought-control Smith Act.

was brought to a standstill by the Old Guard of the AFL, its own ranks were being increasingly divided by those favoring industrial unionism, by those aghast at the AFL's failure to take advantage of the golden opportunity to organize the mass industries.

The workers moved into the AFL federal locals, which increased from 307 in 1932 to 1,788 in 1934. Most of them outraged every tenet and every rule of AFL procedure and practice.

The new unions adopted the methods of militancy, of the IWW and the Trade Union Unity League, with giant, mass picket lines; with singing and forums, debates and meetings; with the women organized into auxiliaries and active members of every strike; with sitdowns and slowdowns and demonstrations and flying squadrons that sped from point to point in fast cars when there was trouble.

They inaugurated the use of sound trucks, of the loud-speaker booming instructions over an amplifier from an auto, the great voice sounding impressively over whole square miles as it directed picket lines and maneuvers of actual battle when troops or police assaulted the lines.

The new union militants, soundly indicting the bosses, purchased time on the radio, full-page advertisements in the newspapers, organized wide citizens committees backing the strike, brought the issues of the strike to the public in understandable terms. And always they held mass meetings where a democratic majority vote was necessary before any union policy, including union contracts, could come into being.

All over West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Kentucky, a now fighting John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, had signs put up declaring, "President Roosevelt Wants You To Join the Union!" All through the Middle West handbills containing the same message were appearing in factory washrooms, in factory restaurants, even coming down the assembly line, a handbill tucked into each auto or tire or other article moving by the workers on the conveyor belt.

Meanwhile big business was launching an anti-union drive of unprecedented proportions. Some of the breadth of this drive, almost always disguised as a fight against Communism, can be seen from the 1936 report of the National Association of Manufacturers. The report, made by Harry A. Bullis, described the scope of the Association's propaganda as follows:

Press—Industrial Press Service—reaches 5,300 weekly newspapers every week. Weekly cartoon service—sent to 2,000 weekly newspapers.

"Uncle Abner Says"—comic cartoon appearing in 309 daily papers with a total circulation of 2,000,000 readers.

"You and Your Nation's Affairs"—daily articles by well known economists appearing in 260 newspapers with a total circulation of over 4,500,000.

Factual bulletin—monthly exposition of industry's viewpoint sent to every newspaper editor in the country.

For Foreign-born citizens—weekly press service, translated into German,

Hungarian, Polish and Italian, printed in papers with a total circulation of almost 2,500,000.

Nationwide Advertising—6 full page ads about the "American System" of which 500 newspapers have carried one or more.

Radio—"The American Family Robinson"—program heard from coast to coast over 222 radio stations once a week, and over 176 stations twice a week.

Foreign language—1,188 programs in 6 languages over 79 radio stations.

Movies—Two 10-minute films for general distribution, seen by over 2,000,000 people.

Public Meetings—70 meetings featuring 8 professional speakers.

Employee Information Service—Leaflets—a series of 25 distributed to over 11,000,000 workers.

Posters—over 300,000 for a series of 24 for bulletin boards in plants throughout the country.

Films—10 sound slide films for showing in plants.

Outdoor advertising—60,000 billboard ads scheduled for 1937.

Pamphlets—"You and Industry Library"—over 1,000,000 copies of a series of seven pamphlets distributed to libraries, colleges, businessmen, lawyers and educators.

In addition the NAM distributed thousands of copies of a booklet endorsing the Mohawk Valley strike-breaking method as well as 10,000 copies, at a later date, of the booklet called *Join the CIO and help build a Soviet America*. The United States Chamber of Commerce, with a membership of 700,000, sponsored propaganda activities whose extent was as wide as that of the NAM.

In 1934, in a futile effort to ward off union organization American industry began spending an estimated \$80,000,000 yearly for the purchase of spies, their duties reporting on the activities of employees and their unions, building blacklists, framing trade union officials, and breaking up trade unions. According to the later researches of the La Follette Senate Committee, which in 1936 began an investigation into industry's purchase of violence and espionage, 230 detective agencies furnished the largest American corporations with 100,000 spies, who were thought to have penetrated every one of the country's 48,000 local trade unions. Many of the spies became officials of the trade unions and an increasing number of active trade unionists were fingered and fired.

General Motors officials, testifying before the Senate Committee, blandly admitted that they had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for spies in an effort to violate, or circumvent, the law providing for collective bargaining. In the purchase of spies General Motors had spent \$419,850.10 with the Pinkertons⁷ alone between January, 1934, and July, 1936, when they spent

⁷ In recent years Pinkerton's industrial spying has fallen off, much of the finger work being taken over by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Discharges of union militants are now often carried out through the device of Congressional hearings, often held just before labor board elections.

a total of \$994,855.68 with all agencies hired during that period. Similar sums for spies were spent by the Radio Corporation of America, Westinghouse Electric, Aluminum Company of America, Chrysler, Firestone, Standard Oil, New York Edison, Bethlehem Steel, Libby-Owens-Ford Glass Co., United Shoe Machinery, Carnegie-Illinois Steel, Western Union, Continental Can, and a half a hundred other of the leading American corporations.

It was also in 1934, according to testimony before the La Follette Senate Committee, that American industry began spending hundreds of thousands of dollars for tear gas, shot guns, automatic pistols, armored cars, fragmentation bombs, sub-machine guns with which to attack employees in the strikes that were clearly looming. Even as American big business executives talked of law and order, of Communist plots to employ force and violence, they were spending a total of \$1,040,621.14 between 1933 and 1936 with only three of the many companies manufacturing armaments for the private wars of corporations against their workers.

The Federal Laboratories, Inc., began to do a land office business. Its president, John W. Young, testifying before a Senate Committee, said that he was really a humanitarian at heart since he sold more gas than bullets to the corporations and it was "better to gas a striker than to kill him." Jubilant because of an abundance of what one of his representatives called "nice, juicy strikes," Young sent salesmen wherever a strike loomed, with large orders invariably resulting. Usually his salesmen set up gas guns right on the spot, discharging them into picket lines as part of the free demonstration.

Young loved strikes, which he often called Communist insurrections. Joseph M. Roush, star salesman for the Federal Laboratories, hustled across the country from Pittsburgh in the summer of 1934 with a varied assortment of gas guns and gas when the newspapers carried reports that there was to be a strike of San Francisco maritime workers. In addition to his weapons he carried with him, as all Federal salesmen did, copies of Elizabeth Dilling's *The Red Network* and pamphlets entitled *The Red Line of Crime and Civil Disorder*. It was his contention, increasingly popular, that all strikes were caused by Communists.

Roush arrived in San Francisco just in time for the maritime strike of 1934, where he gave a practical demonstration of the worth of his product. He wrote his home office:

"The evening of July 2, Sergeant McInerney and Officer Myron Gernea . . . asked me if I would go with them in the Headquarters' car the next morning and take some of my gas equipment. They said they expected considerable rioting and would appreciate my experience in the use of gas. . . . We started to do battle with [gas] equipment and two shotguns. We did not have long to wait. The first riot started early in the morning and we went in with short range shells and grenades. . . .

"I might mention that during one of the riots, I shot a long range projectile into a group, the shell hitting one man and causing a fracture of the skull from which he has since died. As he was a Communist, I have had no feeling in the matter and I am sorry that I did not get more."

After this demonstration, Roush wrote, "It was a landslide business for us. Immediately following . . . came orders for gas and machine guns from the surrounding territory." He continued:

"Please convey my thanks to all the members of the company that made this business possible for us. I can think of no greater inspiration to get out and get more business than the knowledge of how firmly the factory and its personnel are behind me. . . .

"I shall make San Francisco my permanent headquarters. . . . I find it so practical and pleasant I shall continue to live here. . . ."

Trying to regain the offensive, industry evolved an elaborate strike-breaking formula known as the Mohawk Valley Formula, the creation of James H. Rand, Jr., of the Remington Rand Company. Circulated widely by the National Association of Manufacturers, the plan had as its first point, according to the findings of the La Follette Senate Committee, the branding of any strike anywhere and every strike everywhere as a Communist plot. Other points provided for complete domination of local police, full-page advertisements in the newspapers, the widespread use of armed vigilantes and citizens' committees, the formation of "loyal employee groups," and a back-to-work movement which was to smash through picket lines by means of tear gas, clubs, and machine guns employed by police and vigilantes. All violence, the La Follette Committee found, was to be charged to out-of-town agitators and Reds.

At the same time the American Legion launched a mammoth drive against "the menace of Communism" under the leadership of its national commander, one Frank N. Belgrano, Jr., president of the Pacific National Fire Insurance Company and the American Security Insurance Corporation, and vice president of the Bank of America National Trust and Savings Association and the Occidental Life Insurance Company. A few months before the inauguration of their drive against Communism, wealthy Legion members visited General Smedley Butler, according to his testimony before a Congressional committee, offering to elect him national commander of the Legion if he would lead a fascist march on Washington for the ousting of the Roosevelt administration and a fascist seizure of power.

In 1934 the Ku Klux Klan was revived under Dr. Hiram W. Evans of Dallas, its prey union organizers, its fake purpose the saving of the nation from Communism. In the same year the Sentinels of the Republic, financially backed by Atwater Kent and the Pew oil millions, launched a campaign against trade unions, Roosevelt, and Communism. The American

Liberty League was formed in 1934, its members controlling investments totaling thirty-seven billions of dollars, its goal the open shop and the destruction of the New Deal, its method the campaign against Communism.

A secret organization known as the Special Conference Committee, made up of the twelve biggest corporations in the country—General Motors, Standard Oil of New Jersey, General Electric, Goodyear, Westinghouse, American Telephone and Telegraph, Du Pont, U.S. Rubber, Bethlehem, International Harvester, U.S. Steel, and Irving Trust—considered itself a mysterious, unknown General Staff of the counteroffensive against labor and the New Deal. In an effort to pressure the Government E. S. Cowdrick, secretary of the committee, wrote to the Assistant Secretary of Commerce on Dec. 20, 1935, that business confidence in the administration would be restored if there would be "definite opposition to such measures as the 30-hour bill, the Walsh government contract bill." Sometime later another letter was sent by Cowdrick to the same Commerce Department official suggesting that "it might be well also to call off the La Follette [labor spy] investigation."

H. W. Anderson, General Motors vice president in charge of personnel, writing to a colleague in the Special Conference Committee troubled by union organization, according to the La Follette Committee, suggested, "Maybe you could use a little Black Legion down in your country. It might help."

The Black Legion to which Anderson of General Motors referred was a Northern version of the Ku Klux Klan. Springing up during the depression in the Detroit and Flint areas, it had more than a thousand members who rigged themselves up in a blackhooded regalia and armed themselves with whips, blacksnakes, and revolvers. They kidnapped scores of automobile workers active in attempts at union organization in 1934 and 1935, flogged them, tortured them, and killed at least ten with the allegation in each instance that the men were Communists. Governor George H. Earle of Pennsylvania made the public charge that the Black Legion was being financed by the du Ponts of Delaware, General Motors, and the tycoons of the Liberty League.

In all the long history of the Red Drive, reaching back to 1877 and ascending to high points at Haymarket, the Pullman Strike of 1894, and the Palmer Raids of 1919-20, there had never been so many organizations with so many millions of dollars devoted to the breaking of labor and reform through the charge of Communism. But somehow it didn't take. The economic royalists had overplayed their hand. In the first place the government as expressed in the Roosevelt administration and the New Deal was hostile to red-baiting since the New Deal, itself, was so often the victim of it. Moreover, the tycoons persistently whispered that Roosevelt, himself, was an agent of the Kremlin and this to most seemed merely ridiculous. A Communist scare, to be successful, needs all the power of government behind it.

Officials of the New Deal knew that it was only a dodge to divide and confuse the people.

By 1934 labor solidarity, "an injury to one is an injury to all," had soared to a general acceptance by local unions the country over. When one union's picket lines were attacked by police all unions in a given locality threatened general strike. This happened again and again in 1934 and 1935. It happened in Milwaukee in February, 1934. It happened in Minneapolis in May of that year. It happened in Pekin, Ill. Everywhere workers were saying to police and goons, "If you smash that picket line every union in the city is going out."

In Toledo eighty-three of ninety-one local unions voted a general strike when violence was used against 3,000 striking metal workers. In Terre Haute 26,000 workers went out on a two-day general strike in support of 600 police-assaulted metal workers. But the greatest demonstration of solidarity, and one of the greatest strikes in all American history, was the general strike that made San Francisco as silent and still and unmoving as death itself in the summer of 1934 when all the city's unions rallied to the help of the hard pressed maritime workers.

5. Solidarity on the Embarcadero

San Francisco is a busy city of 600,000, its heart the waterfront, the chief source of its life. And yet the men who kept the city alive, who did its most important work, the longshoremen who loaded and unloaded the vessels that made the city prosperous with trade, the seamen who manned the ships, received in 1933 little more than \$10 a week. To be precise, the average weekly wage of longshoremen was \$10.45, while able seamen received \$53 a month and ordinary seamen \$36.

And yet even more important was the fact that the maritime workers were voiceless serfs in an industrial autocracy, powerless employees of a shipping industry which received millions on millions of dollars, according to the Black Senatorial Investigation, in subsidies from the federal government. A few seamen belonged to a corrupt, sell-out organization, the International Seamen's Union, and still fewer to the militant Marine Workers Industrial Union (TUUL), but to all practical purposes they were unorganized. The longshoremen, since 1919, had been dragooned into a creature of the shipping industry known as the Blue Book Union, an employers' organization controlled by gangsters who forced the underpaid longshoremen to bribe them for jobs.

The shape-up, that is, a crowd of longshoremen packing around a foreman on the street, each one hoping that he would be chosen for work, was the common method of hiring. There was usually a three- or four-day search or wait for work between jobs but once gained a longshoreman might work twenty-four to thirty-six hours at a stretch on a single shift. Seamen,

after they had once shipped out, too, had long periods of unemployment, worked on an average of between fourteen and sixteen hours a day.

In 1933, under the impetus of NIRA and Section 7(A) as well as the spur of intolerable conditions, longshoremen in San Francisco and up and down the Pacific coast began flocking into the International Longshoremen's Association, AFL. Knowing something of Joseph P. Ryan,⁸ its president, they were determined on rank-and-file control. One of their leaders was a sharp-featured, sharp-witted longshoreman by the name of Harry Bridges. A tough and rugged character, his assets were an impregnable honesty and a stout belief in the ability and right of the rank-and-file to govern themselves.

Although federal law made it mandatory that the shipping magnates negotiate in collective bargaining with any union that their employees chose, they unhesitatingly broke the law by refusing to so negotiate. Instead, in September, 1933, they discharged four rank-and-file leaders of the union. When the regional labor board ordered their reinstatement, the longshoremen surged into the ILA with such unanimity that the Blue Book Union "became little more than an office with a telephone number."

After the employers had refused to negotiate or recognize the union over a period of months 12,000 longshoremen went out on strike at 8 p.m. on May 9, 1934, in San Francisco, Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Pedro, San Diego, Stockton, Bellingham, Aberdeen, Grays Harbor, Astoria, and all other Pacific coast ports. The Marine Workers Industrial Union followed suit and by May 23 eight maritime unions and 35,000 workers were out on strike up and down the coast.

It was primarily unprecedented police brutality that turned the seamen's strike into a general strike of 127,000 San Francisco workers that in an instant transformed the city into a ghost town in which there was no movement. The police took their line from the Industrial Association, the combination of San Francisco's most powerful tycoons, organized in 1919 as a Law and Order Committee to break a waterfront strike and developing until it was the real ruler of San Francisco. The slightest utterance of its officials became newspaper headlines. The employer organization was almost decisive in the election of mayors, governors, Congressmen. It maintained a powerful lobby in Washington. It was the Pacific coast's most powerful group, its members owning shipping companies, piers, warehouses, railroads, banks, utility companies, trust companies, land, insurance corporations, and public officials.

From 8 P.M. on May 9 officials of the Industrial Association and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce said there was nothing to negotiate. There was only a Communist insurrection to put down. Typical of the statements that filled the newspapers was that of J. M. Maillard, Jr., president of the Chamber of Commerce:

⁸ In 1953 Joseph P. Ryan was ousted as president of the International Longshoremen's Association and indicted for stealing union funds which he had earmarked to fight Communism.

"The San Francisco waterfront strike is out of hand. It is not a conflict between employer and employee—between capital and labor—it is a conflict which is rapidly spreading between American principles and un-American radicalism . . . the welfare of business and industry and the entire public is at stake in the outcome of this crisis."

The port, officials of the employers' organizations declared, must be opened. The police must break and clear the mass picket lines from before the piers.

The longshoremen had drawn up a list of demands, pay of \$1 an hour, a six-hour day, a thirty-hour week, a union hiring hall, but officials of the Industrial Association declared there was no issue at stake but the suppression of a Red Revolt. Press, pulpit, and radio combined with tireless unanimity to whip up hysteria against workers striving to better their lives. Not unusual was the first-page story of the *Chronicle*, "Red Army Marching on City." The story read in part:

"The reports stated the communist army planned the destruction of railroad and highway facilities to paralyze transportation and later, communication, while San Francisco and the Bay Area were made a focal point in a red struggle for control of government.

"First warning communist forces were nearing the Northern California border was relayed from J. R. Given, Southern Pacific superintendent at Dunsmuir, to District State Highway Engineer Fred W. Hazelwood who immediately reported to State Director of Public Works Earl Lee Kelly."

Bumbling Joseph P. Ryan, president of the International Longshoremen's Association but in league with the gangsters of New York, was rushed from New York to quiet the strikers. Long known as an ardent fighter against Communism, he did his part as expected when unable to sell out the maritime workers. He said the strike was a Communist Plot and again the headlines shrieked. Then Edward F. McGrady, Assistant Secretary of Labor whose part in breaking the furriers' strike in New York may be recalled, was rushed from Washington and when he, too, could not succeed in forcing the longshoremen to give up their demand for a union hiring hall, he, too, said the strike was Red Revolution.

With the stage set and the police eager, the employers announced that they would smash the picket lines before the piers on the Embarcadero on July 3, 1934. At 1:27 P.M., with thousands of pickets massed before the piers, the steel rolling doors on Pier 38 went up and five trucks loaded with cargo, preceded by eight police radio patrol cars, moved out. Mike Quin in his history of the strike tells what happened:

"A deafening roar went up from the pickets. Standing on the running board of a patrol car at the head of the caravan, Police Captain Thomas M. Hoertkorn flourished a revolver and shouted, 'The port is open!'

"With single accord the great mass of pickets surged forward. The Embar-

cadero became a vast tangle of fighting men. Bricks flew and clubs battered skulls. The police opened fire with revolvers and riot guns. Clouds of tear gas swept the picket lines and sent the men choking in defeat. Mounted police were dragged from their saddles and beaten to the pavement.

"The cobblestones of the Embarcadero were littered with fallen men, bright puddles of blood colored the gray expanse.

"Squads of police who looked like Martian monsters in their special helmets and gas masks led the way, flinging gas bombs ahead of them. . . ."

The fighting continued for four hours before a vast gallery of San Franciscans, perhaps half of the city watching it from the hills which loom above the waterfront. Two airplanes, packed with the curious, circled low over the bloody battle area. The battle was fierce but it was only the prelude to Bloody Thursday. The next day, after the initial attack of the police, was July 4, and by common consent there was a one-day truce before the battle resumed on Thursday, July 5. Quin writes:

"There were no preliminaries this time. They just took up where they left off. . . . Teeming thousands covered the hillsides. Many high school and college boys, unknown to their parents, had put on old clothes and gone down to fight with the union men. Hundreds of working men started for work, then changed their minds and went down to the picket lines."

At 8 A.M. police went into action. One newspaper reported:

"Vomiting gas was used in many cases, instead of the comparatively innocuous tear gas, and scores of dreadfully nauseated strikers and civilians were incapacitated. There was no sham about the battles yesterday. Police ran into action with drawn revolvers. Scores of rounds of ammunition were fired, and riot guns were barking throughout the day."

But the strikers and their thousands of sympathizers fought on with their bare hands against bullets and bombs. Their only weapons were bricks and stones. Hundreds were badly wounded. Two, Nick Bordoise and Howard Sperry, were killed. Sperry was a longshoreman; Bordoise was a culinary worker, a member of the Cooks' Union and of the Communist Party. A reporter for the *Chronicle* in describing the bloodshed wrote:

"Don't think of this as a riot. It was a hundred riots big and little. Don't think of it as one battle, but a dozen battles."

All day the battle raged and all day reinforcements from other unions poured into the riddled picket lines, workers declaring, "If they win this, there'll never be another union in Frisco!" The police, clubbing and injuring literally hundreds of passersby and bystanders, charged into the union headquarters of the longshoremen and wrecked it. At the close of the day Governor Merriam ordered in the National Guard, two thousand of them with full equipment, and Harry Bridges said, "We cannot stand up against police, machine guns, and National Guard bayonets."

The employers thought they had won. They had not. The strike was just beginning. "That night," writes Quin, "San Francisco vibrated to intense conversation. Every home or gathering place in town hummed with talk. Doorbells and telephones rang. Neighbors came in from next door. . . . Men had been shot down in cold blood. Authority had taken the shape of force and violence. Bedtime came and went but still the city talked. . . . A General Strike was being forged in the firesides of San Francisco."

The Painters' Union, Local 1158, sent out a call for a general strike and it had scarcely been issued when the Machinists Union, Local 68, took up the demand. But first labor had to bury its dead. More than 35,000 workers walked behind the coffins. There were no police about as the stern-faced workers marched through the heart of the city. One newspaperman wrote of the slain men:

"In life they wouldn't have commanded a second glance on the streets of San Francisco, but in death they were borne the length of Market Street in a stupendous and reverent procession that astounded the city."

And Quin writes of the funeral:

"A union band struck up the slow cadence of the Beethoven funeral march. The great composer's music never applied more fittingly to human suffering. Slowly—barely creeping—the trucks moved out into Market Street. With slow, rhythmic steps the giant procession followed. Faces were hard and serious. Hats were held proudly across chests. Slow-pouring, like thick liquid, the great mass flowed onto Market Street.

"Streetcarmen stopped their cars along the line of march, and stood silently, holding their uniform caps across their chests, holding their heads high and firm.

"Not one smile in the endless blocks of marching men. Crowds on the sidewalk, for the most part, stood with heads erect and hats removed. Others watched the procession with fear and alarm. Here and there well dressed businessmen . . . stood amazed and impressed but with their hats still on their heads. Sharp voices shot out from the line of march. 'Take your hats off!'

"The tone of voice was extraordinary. The reaction was immediate. With quick, nervous gestures the businessmen obeyed. Hours went by, but the marchers still poured onto Market Street."

Now locals were meeting all over the city, one after another voting for a general strike. In the debates it was admitted that Communists were active in the struggle of the maritime workers. For that matter, it was said, they, or other Marxists, had been active in every big strike since the railroad strike of 1877. Trade unionist after trade unionist declared that for the San Francisco labor movement to fall for the employers' red scare was to agree to its own division, to less pay, longer hours. On July 10 the Alameda Labor Council went on record for a general strike. On July 12 the powerful locals of the teamsters' union in San Francisco and Oakland issued a call for union and solidarity, favored the general strike.

William Green sent telegrams forbidding the strike, but by July 15 some 160 local AFL unions, with a membership of 127,000 workers, had voted general strike effective the following day.

The typographical workers and powerhouse employees stayed in but with these two exceptions members of every union walked out on the morning of July 16. Quin writes:

"The paralysis was effective beyond all expectation. To all intents and purposes industry was at a complete standstill. The great factories were empty and deserted. No streetcars were running. Virtually all stores were closed. The giant apparatus of commerce was a lifeless, helpless hulk.

"Labor had withdrawn its hand. The workers had drained out of the shops and plants like life-blood, leaving only a silent framework embodying millions of dollars worth of invested capital. In the absence of labor, the giant machinery loomed as so much idle junk. . . .

"Everything was there, all intact as the workers had left it— instruments, equipment, tools, machinery, raw materials and the buildings themselves. When the men walked out they took only what belonged to them—their labor. And when they took that they might as well have taken everything, because all the elaborate apparatus they left behind was worthless and meaningless without their hand. The machinery was a mere extension of labor, created by and dependent upon labor.

"Labor held the life-blood and energy. The owners remained in possession of the corpse.

"Highways leading into the city bristled with picket lines. Nothing moved except by permission of the strike committee. Labor was in control. Employers, however, controlled an important factor. Through the 'conservative wing' they held the balance of power within the General Strike Committee. But this 'conservative wing' had to buck a strong progressive minority, and dared not move too obviously contrary to the will of the masses."

Three thousand additional troops were dispatched to the strikebound city but that turned not a wheel. Mobs of vigilantes were sworn in as special police, armed with clubs and guns, but the workers were at home, with a new consciousness of their power and dignity. When they ceased working the world stopped. And all of the silk hats, dollars, and guns could not start it again without them.

The vigilantes swung into an orgy of lawlessness, wrecking union halls, raiding clubs of the foreign-born, beating their occupants, destroying progressive book stores, scattering all the volumes and pamphlets to the street. The police looked on as the vigilantes destroyed the offices of the *Western Worker*, Communist paper backing the strike. They watched as they wrecked the headquarters of the Communist Party, the Marine Workers' Industrial Union, the ILA soup kitchen, the Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League, the Mission Workers' Neighborhood House.

Then the police themselves moved into lawlessness as they arrested 500

old men, members of the unemployed, the helpless down-and-out, and charged that those hauled in were Communist conspirators. "The Communist Party is through in San Francisco," announced Captain J. J. O'Meara, head of the police radical squad, before it was found that not one of the old men was a Communist. They were finally released.

But the force and violence of police and vigilantes moved not a wheel. The city was like a tomb all of July 16. Nothing moved on July 17. San Francisco was a ghost on July 18. Yet on each of these days "the conservative wing" had succeeded in loosening the strike's grip. Restaurants were allowed to open on one day. It was extended to some trucking the next day. More exceptions were made the next. Rumors were spread that the strike was over. One of the biggest demonstrations in the history of American labor ended on July 19 when Deal, Vandeleur, and Kidwell, conservative AFL officials, refusing a rollcall vote, announced that the central labor body had ended the general strike by a standing vote of 191 to 174.

But the workers returned as if celebrating a victory. They put their hands to switch, throttle, wheel, and assembly line and death became life. The maritime workers, rejecting all attempts to divide the eight unions out on strike, remained on their picket line but with an increased strength. No police assaulted their lines now. National Guardsmen stayed their distance. Labor had demonstrated its power and the tycoons of the Industrial Association, fighting now among themselves, did not want another taste of labor's unity.

On July 30 the 35,000 maritime workers went back to work. Within a matter of weeks the longshoremen had gained, as a direct result of the strike, the six-hour day, a thirty-hour week, and time and a half for overtime. Wages were raised to a basis of ninety-five cents an hour, \$1.40 for overtime. But above all they had won the basis for the union hiring hall, a method for democratic rotary hiring without which the union would have been powerless to protect its gains.

The seamen returned under conditions which granted recognition to the International Seamen's Union. But because the union was in the control of a reactionary clique subservient to the shipping interests the seamen won little substantial gain. On the other hand, because the longshoremen's local was run by its rank and file its members' gains were persistently extended.

Harry Bridges, the rank-and-file leader, was elected president of the San Francisco local of the International Longshoremen's Association and later he was elected to the presidency of the entire West Coast District. From then on he was a marked man. He had committed the unpardonable sin. He had raised wages. He had lowered hours. He had put more wages in pay envelopes. He had transformed employees into men with a voice in the decisions governing their own hire. If he had not done all these things himself, he at least had played an important part in accomplishing these worthy ends.

From the moment the Bridges leadership played a vital role in raising wages, Bridges was a Communist in the eyes of the powerful Industrial As-

sociation of San Francisco. He could be neither bought nor frightened, bribed nor bullied, and with that established the employers marked him for destruction. Whether he was a Communist or not made not a whit of difference. He had worked with Communists and he was incorruptible.

On four separate occasions they have gathered together a choice selection of paid spies, perjurers, and criminals to testify as told or face prison. On four different occasions federal authority or juries have found that Bridges is not a Communist, has not been a Communist, but has instead been persecuted as few men in history in an implacable plot to frame him. Even the Supreme Court of the United States so ruled. Despite this, powerful interests on the Pacific coast are now engaged in a fifth attempt to frame Harry Bridges.⁹

But workingmen know that all the endless frame-up attempts against Bridges stem from his leadership of the San Francisco General Strike of 1934, a demonstration of iron-clad unity which inspired all American labor. It was an important factor in increased wages at points far from San Francisco. It was the prelude to even greater battles and greater victories.

⁹ "A monument to man's intolerance to man," were the words with which the late Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy described the persecution of Bridges. And Supreme Court Justice Douglas found in 1945 that Bridges was responsible only "for a militant advocacy of trade unionism" and that he had never been guilty of "Subversive conduct condemned by the statute."

Dean James Landis of the Harvard Law School found after hearings in 1939 that Bridges "is not a member nor affiliated with the Communist Party." He described one witness against Bridges as "a self-confessed liar," "pathological," "corrupt," and others as "prejudiced, intemperate and overbearing."